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A Fun Quiz Yourself Section Included!

Elvis Presley

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Contents

Elvis' first songs	11-17
The colonel	19-26
In the army	27-32
The great years	33-40
Elvis the legend	41-45
Quiz yourself	49-55

In the 1950s, people began hearing a new kind of music. It was called rock 'n' roll, and young people loved the sound of it. To them, Elvis Presley was the king of rock 'n' roll.

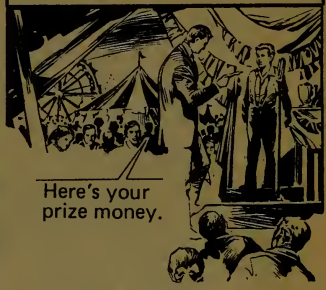
Elvis's First Songs

Elvis was born January 8, 1935 in Tupelo, Mississippi. His parents, Vernon and Gladys Presley, lived in a two-room house.

Vernon Presley did any kind of work he could get—sharecropping, driving a milk truck, and sorting lumber.

Gladys took her son everywhere she went. Often they went to church meetings.

And they went to fairs. When Elvis was ten, he won a prize for singing at the Mississippi-Alabama Fair.



One day Elvis was shopping with his parents. They bought him a guitar, and he learned to play it by copying the sounds he heard on the radio.

Times were hard, and Vernon had no job. So the family moved. In Memphis, Vernon found work packing paint cans. Gladys sometimes worked in a curtain factory.

Well, there's no work here. Let's hope things will be better in Memphis, Tennessee

Elvis made some good friends in school. His favorite things were football and shop.

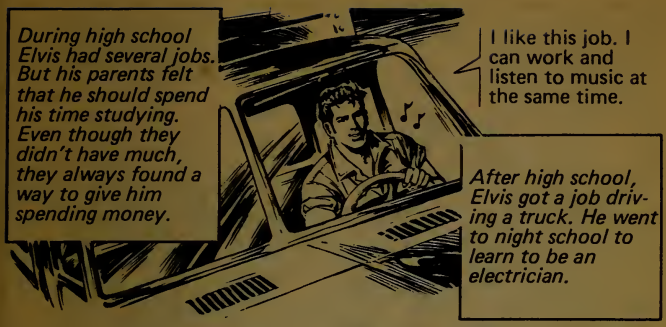
Elvis sure loves football. He's good, too.

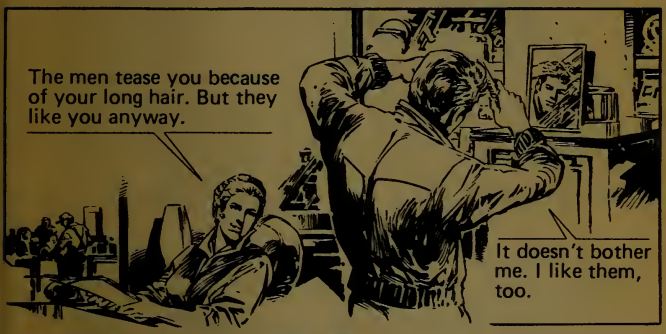
Some of the boys make fun of your long hair and bright clothes.

I'm not going to change my hair and clothes just to please them.

Elvis still liked to sing, but not in front of a group. In his last year of high school, however, a teacher arranged for him to sing in a school show. The students loved him!

I had to push him out to do another song. He couldn't believe he was chosen as the star of the show.


During high school Elvis had several jobs. But his parents felt that he should spend his time studying. Even though they didn't have much, they always found a way to give him spending money.
I like this job. I can work and listen to music at the same time.
After high school, Elvis got a job driving a truck. He went to night school to learn to be an electrician.

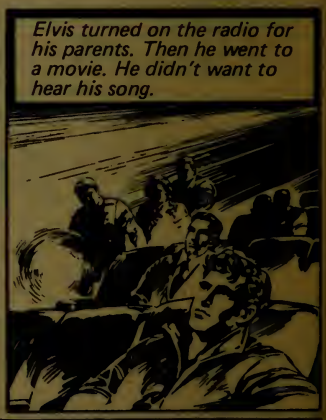

The men tease you because of your long hair. But they like you anyway.
It doesn't bother me. I like them, too.

I'd like to make a record.
In 1953, Elvis paid four dollars to make a record as a surprise for his mother. He sang two songs: "My Happiness" and "That's When Your Heartache Begins."

Here is the Presley boy's song.
I think he's really different.
At the Memphis Recording Studio, Sam Phillips, the owner, liked what he had heard.

Sam took Elvis to meet Scotty Moore and Bill Black. They worked together to find a kind of music they liked.
What are you doing? It sounds great.
I think we have something worked out.

Sam took their first record to Dewey Phillips, a disc jockey for radio station WHBQ. People called in asking that it be played over and over.
I've played that record fourteen times in a row!



The record made by Elvis, Scotty, and Bill was very important. For the first time, people of all ages heard Elvis sing.

On one side of the record was a song called "That's All Right, Mama." On the other side was "Blue Moon of Kentucky." People loved the new sound and began to call it "rockabilly."

To be on the Grand Ole Opry was a great honor. Elvis was soon asked to appear. But after the show . . .

Son, you should go back to truck driving.

Elvis felt so bad that he went home right away. He even forgot to take his suitcase.

But the three friends tried again. The second radio show in October, 1954, went so well that they were offered a job.

They're great! We'll hire them for a year.

*After that, whenever Elvis sang, the auditorium** was filled.

Let's just hope this car doesn't wear out before my wife finishes paying for it.

TENNESSEE
MISSISSIPPI
ALABAMA
GEORGIA
FLOR
LOUISIANA
TEXAS

It's good of her to work so she can give us money. Someday we'll make it up to her.

The group was now called the Blue Moon Boys. *Bob Neal, their manager, set up several shows a week for them at schools in the South.*

Elvis was on his way up. Billboard, *the record magazine, wrote about him.*

And his singing style was drawing more and more attention.

The Colonel

THE COLONEL

In 1955, Elvis met Colonel Tom Parker. Knowing him was to change Elvis' life.

Tom Parker was born in 1910. He worked in a carnival.

How's business, Tom?

I'm doing fine.

PONY

MONKEY

At seventeen he had his own pony and monkey act.

Later, he traveled with other carnivals and shows. He did any kind of work that would earn him money.

Here you are, folks! Beautiful canaries!

Once he painted sparrows yellow and sold them as canaries. He cut hot dogs in half and put each half at the end of the bun. Then he sold them as "foot-long hot dogs."

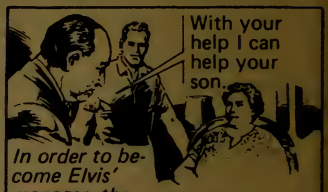
Later, he became manager for country singers Eddy Arnold and Hank Snow. He even put together his own traveling shows.

We'll have to use the chicken act.

Once, when Eddy Arnold couldn't sing, the colonel brought out a new act—"dancing chickens." But what Tom Parker really needed was a star. Soon he would find that person in Elvis.

By 1955, with his records and concerts, Elvis was making $2,000 a week. He bought a pink Cadillac and a large home for his parents.

That year Elvis appeared on Hank Snow's radio show. That was when he met Tom Parker.

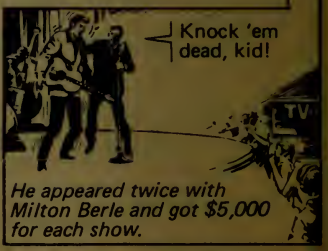


In order to become Elvis' manager, the colonel became friends with Mr. and Mrs. Presley.

*And in November, 1955 he took over Elvis' career.***

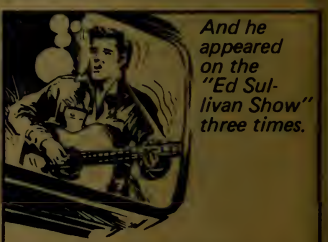
1956 was Elvis' best year yet. With the colonel's help, he worked harder and made even more money. He appeared on TV.

He received $1,250 for the "Dorsey Brothers Stage Show." No one had never seen a singer like Elvis before.



He appeared twice with Milton Berle and got $5,000 for each show.

He also sang on a Steve Allen show.



And he appeared on the "Ed Sullivan Show" three times.

Because some people didn't like his wild dancing, Elvis was shown on the TV screen only from the waist up.

Meanwhile, the colonel arranged for RCA to record Elvis' songs.
Beginning with "Heartbreak Hotel," one after another of his records became number one on the charts. Many sold a million copies.
1956
HOUND DOG
DON'T BE CRUEL
I'LL FIX IT
I'M MOVIN' ON
HONEY
SHAKE, RATTLE, AND ROLL
LOVE ME TENDER
BLUE SUEDE SHOE
1957
ALL SHOOK UP
TEDDY BEAR
LOVING YOU
JAILHOUSE ROCK
Music was never the same again. During the 1950s, Elvis made more gold records than many other stars did during their whole careers.

Colonel Parker also arranged for Elvis to make three movies.

The public loved Elvis' first movie, Love Me Tender. *Millions of people went to see it.*

The next two movies were also hits. By now Elvis had thousands of fans.

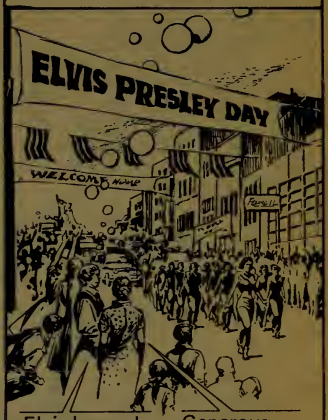
After finishing Love Me Tender *in 1956, the colonel arranged a cross-country singing tour for Elvis.*

He still doesn't like to sing in front of large groups.

But he's all right as soon as he begins.

Everywhere he went Elvis was met by screaming crowds, mostly teen-age girls.

Ten years after winning a prize for singing "Old Shep" at the Mississippi-Alabama Fair, Elvis returned home to Tupelo.



Elvis learned one thing from his mother. He's always polite.

Generous, too. He's giving the money for his show to the city.

About this time, the colonel began selling pictures of Elvis at concerts. He also began to put Elvis pictures on anything he thought people would buy.

There were Elvis tennis shoes, T-shirts, bracelets, and teddy bears. Many fans wanted to buy the things Colonel Parker had to sell. It turned into a big business.

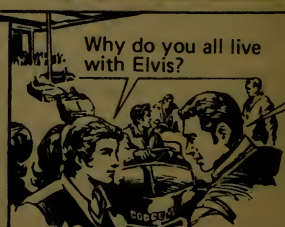
Here you are, ladies and gentlemen! Get your picture of Elvis! Only fifty cents!

In 1956, Elvis probably made ten million dollars. And 1957 was a big year, too.

In 1957, he bought Graceland, an estate in Memphis. The house had twenty-three rooms. He also bought clothes, beautiful rings, big cars, buses, trucks, and motorcycles. He even had a special gate built outside Graceland.

Elvis's parents lived with him at Graceland. So did his grandmother, an aunt, two uncles, and several of his old school friends.

Elvis couldn't appear in public because he would be followed by hundreds of teenage girls. So he had a group of close friends who protected him from the crowds.



For fun, Elvis would rent an amusement park for the night. He and his group would invite their friends to join them there.

In the Army

THE ARMY

In 1958, Elvis' career was interrupted. He was called to serve in the army. His parents and friends went with him to sign up.

Nobody's going to forget Elvis!
KING CREOLE
KING CREOLE
KING CREOLE
Newspaper men were there, too. And so was the colonel who carried balloons printed with the name of Elvis' new movie.

The bus taking the new soldiers to Fort Chaffee, Arkansas, stopped at a restaurant. The girls who worked there began to fight over Elvis.

Do you know how much we could get if we sold that hair to fans?
Someday I'll grow it back again.
Colonel Parker was sorry to see Elvis go into the army. He knew he would have to work hard to keep Elvis' fans interested in him.

Elvis was sent to Fort Hood, Texas, for his army training. There were some problems.
He got over two thousand letters this week! He's getting too much attention.
So reporters were told that they couldn't come back to see Elvis.
On weekends, he had to dodge his fans.
He refused to give concerts while he was in the army. He wanted to be treated just like the other soldiers.
The paper says Elvis Presley can act!
While he was on leave in Memphis, his movie began showing.
In August, Elvis heard terrible news. His mother, whom he loved so much, died at the age of forty-six.
She was more than my mother. She was my friend.
PRESLEY

At the end of September, 1958, the army sent Elvis to Germany.

All the young people in Germany love rock 'n' roll.

Hundreds of German fans came to see Elvis at the dock.

We'd be glad to rent you the house.

The papers said that Elvis lived in a "castle" in Germany. But it was really a simple house he shared with his father.

His fellow soldiers liked Elvis because he acted just like anyone else.

You must be able to read maps and recognize the enemy.

Look at all this mail!

But Elvis was different in one way. He received as many as 10,000 letters a week.

In Germany, Elvis and his father met the women they were later to marry. Elvis' wife was only fourteen when he met her.

In March, 1960, Elvis finished his army duty. When he arrived in the United States, he was greeted by hundreds of fans, the press, the colonel, and friends. Nancy Sinatra was there to give him a gift from her father.

We're all glad you're home!

Besides receiving many gifts, Elvis was praised for his service.

While he was in the army, many people had tried to copy him.

On a TV show, Phil Silvers made fun of Elvis' songs.

Bye Bye Birdie, *a show about a rock 'n' roll singer named Birdie, played in New York.*

But the colonel had made sure that Elvis' name was still well known.

The Great Years

THE GREAT YEARS

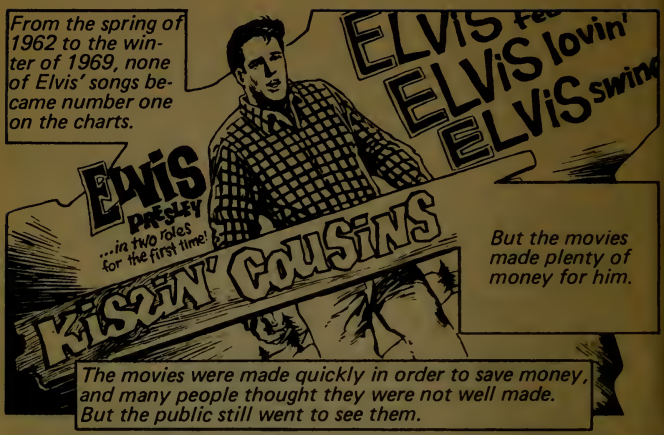
Elvis was as popular as ever. On his train trip to Memphis, fans lined the tracks to greet him.

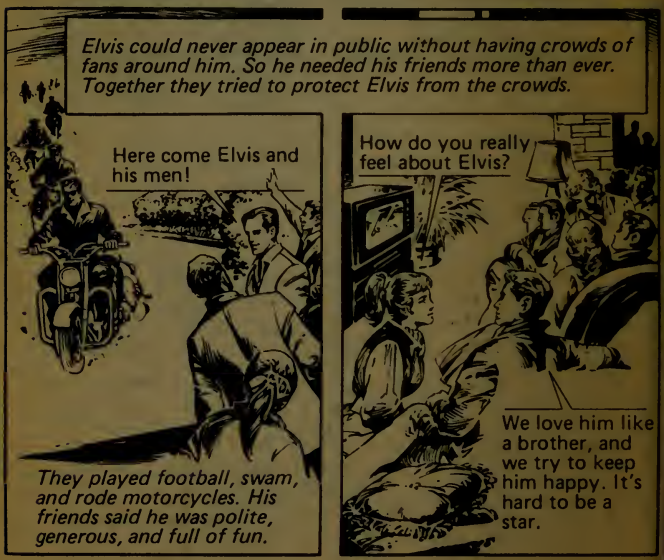
After a few days at Graceland, Elvis left for Miami Beach to do a TV show with Frank Sinatra.

Elvis received $125,000 for six minutes on Sinatra's show.

In 1961 Elvis gave two charity concerts — one in Memphis and one in Hawaii. In Hawaii, 25,000 fans greeted Elvis at the airport.

That was his last concert until 1969. Instead of giving concerts, Elvis made more movies.

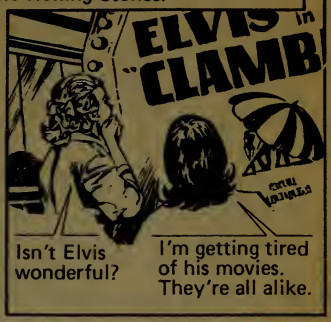

From the spring of 1962 to the winter of 1969, none of Elvis' songs became number one on the charts.
ELVIS
ELVIS lovin'
ELVIS swing
ELVIS PRESLEY ...in two roles for the first time!
KISSIN' COUSINS
But the movies made plenty of money for him.
The movies were made quickly in order to save money, and many people thought they were not well made. But the public still went to see them.


Elvis could never appear in public without having crowds of fans around him. So he needed his friends more than ever. Together they tried to protect Elvis from the crowds.
Here come Elvis and his men!
They played football, swam, and rode motorcycles. His friends said he was polite, generous, and full of fun.
How do you really feel about Elvis?
We love him like a brother, and we try to keep him happy. It's hard to be a star.

One year Elvis' girlfriend, Priscilla Beaulieu, flew from Germany to spend Christmas in Memphis. With them were Elvis' father and his stepmother Dee.
This is a lot better than Christmas in the army.
I like staying here. School is great!
Priscilla stayed with Vernon and Dee until she finished high school in 1963.
Do I look like a movie star?
Elvis spent most of his time in Hollywood making movies.
IS ELVIS MARRIED?
WHY ELVIS and I CAN'T MARRY
WHICH STARLET IS ELVIS NOW?
ELVIS
For years the newspapers and movie magazines had been saying that Elvis was in love with one or another starlet.

But on May 1, 1967, Elvis Presley married Priscilla Beaulieu.
Only the families went to the wedding, you know. But there are hundreds of people at this reception.
After they were married, Elvis and Priscilla spent much of their time at a ranch near Graceland.
It will be hard to leave all this and go back to work.
Their daughter, Lisa Marie, was born on February 1, 1968. Elvis was never happier.
Calls are coming in from all over the world!
And guards are on duty to keep the fans away.
But Elvis couldn't settle down to married life. Priscilla left him in 1972, taking Lisa Marie with her.

Because Elvis was busy living his personal life, he did not appear in public after 1962. Many of his fans began to follow Bob Dylan, the Beatles, and the Rolling Stones.



Then, in December, 1968, Elvis made a TV show.

In July, 1969, Elvis appeared in person at the International Hotel in Las Vegas. Fans came from all over the world to see him. He was on top again.

From then on Elvis appeared in Las Vegas for one month in the winter and one month in the summer. He was paid one million dollars each time. He also appeared at the Houston Astrodome.

His concerts in Las Vegas, the Houston Astrodome, and New York City's Madison Square Garden in the 1970s were very successful. But Elvis was beginning to have problems.

He gave Priscilla a lot of money!

In 1973, Elvis and Priscilla were divorced.

His hair is gray now. He dyes it black.

And Elvis was getting fat. Sometimes he wouldn't allow any pictures to be taken of him.

Elvis is tired. He used to love to sing. Now it's hard work for him.

He isn't healthy. He doesn't smoke or drink, but he eats too much.

Finally, on August 16, 1977, Elvis Presley died of a heart attack. He was forty-two years old.

Elvis the Legend

THE LEGEND

Ann-Margaret had made a movie with Elvis, and they had remained good friends. When she heard of his death, she was very sad.

Something is wrong. Every time I do a show, Elvis sends me a guitar made of flowers. It hasn't come this time.

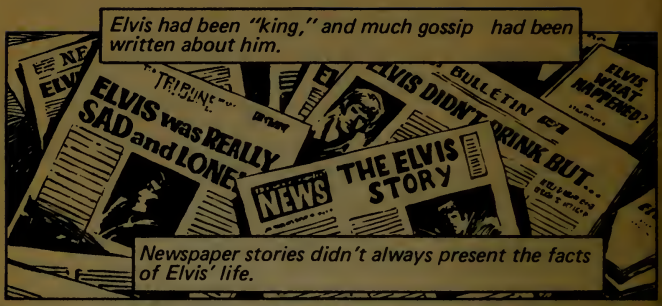
We lost a good friend today.

Frank Sinatra dedicated a concert to Elvis.

Memphis lowered its flags to honor him. Telephone calls came in from all over the world.

President Carter praised Elvis as a symbol of the country's spirit.

And over 100,000 fans went to Graceland to honor him. The country was sad to have lost Elvis so soon.

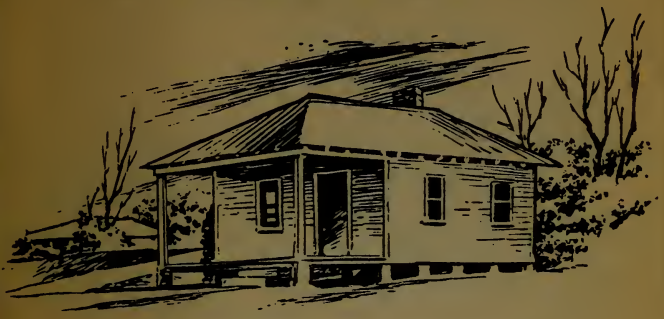

Elvis had been "king," and much gossip had been written about him.
ELVIS was REALLY SAD and LONE
TRIBUNE
ELVIS DIDN'T DRINK BUT...
BULLETIN
ELVIS WHAT HAPPENED?
NEWS
THE ELVIS STORY
Newspaper stories didn't always present the facts of Elvis' life.

The doctor says that Elvis died of a heart attack.
He was going to marry Ginger Alden.
After he died, everyone still talked about Elvis. No one could believe he was gone.

He *was* happy. He loved nice things, especially cars.
And he loved to be generous with his family and his friends. He gave so much to charity.

During his life, Elvis made thirty-three movies. Forty-five of his records sold over one million copies, and he helped change American music forever. He was born poor, but he died a multi-millionaire.
In his short life of forty-two years, Elvis Presley became an American legend.

Do you remember?



When Elvis was born in Mississippi his parents lived in:

a. a mansion. b. an apartment c. a two-room house.

When Elvis was eighteen, he paid $4.00 to make a record:

a. to give to his mother.
b. to send to disc jockeys.
c. to hear how he sounded.

Tom Parker was Elvis Presley's manager. He was called:

a. the major. b. the minor. c. the colonel.

Elvis made a great deal of money. He bought an estate called:

a. Cadillac. b. Heartland. c. Graceland.

Quiz Yourself

(Answers at end of section)

Words to know

gossip	stories that are probably not true
charts	listings of songs according to the number of records people buy
concert	songs done in a show for the public
singing style	the special way one person sings
tour	a series of concerts given in different cities

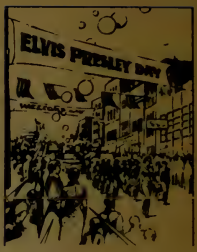
Can you use them?

Using the words above, complete the following sentences.

1. Fans bought Elvis' records by the millions. Many of his songs were number one on the _____ for weeks.
2. Before the _____ was over, the singing group had performed in more than fifty cities.
3. Fans waited two days in the cold to buy tickets to Elvis Presley's _____ .
4. It is not a good idea to spread _____ about someone.
5. Many people did not like Presley's _____ when they first heard him because it was different from the music they were used to.

Using pictures

In reading illustrated stories, you will find it helpful to "read" the pictures as well as the words. Look at this picture. It shows how the people of Elvis' hometown felt about him after he became famous. They named a day after him and held a parade in his honor. As you read this story, look carefully at the pictures, and you will see how people all over the world felt about Elvis Presley.



While you are reading

Elvis Presley became popular partly because Colonel Tom Parker was able to have him appear often before the public. While you are reading, list some of the shows and movies that helped Elvis become a star.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

How well did you read?

When you have finished reading, answer the following questions.

1. Which of the following were problems that Elvis Presley faced as the king of rock 'n' roll?

(Check the correct *answers.*)

_____ a. His movies were not popular.

_____ b. He was called into the army.

_____ c. Hundreds of teenage girls followed him wherever he went.

_____ d. Elvis lost his voice in the war.

_____ e. Other singers became more popular.

2. Elvis had a number of friends living with him and his family at Graceland because:

(Check the correct answer.)

_____ a. they were poor and needed his help.

_____ b. his house was so big that he rented rooms.

_____ c. the police told him to keep people around for protection from robbers.

_____ d. they protected him from the thousands of fans who always crowded around him.

3. Who was responsible for giving Elvis his first break as a recording star?

(Check the correct answer.)

_____ a. Sam Phillips

_____ b. Scotty Moore

_____ c. Bob Neal

_____ d. Phil Silvers

_____ e. Hank Snow

4. Elvis would not give concerts when he was in the army because:

(Check the correct answer.)

_____ a. Colonel Parker said it would not be good for his career.

_____ b. the army would not pay him enough money.

_____ c. he wanted to be treated exactly like the other soldiers.

_____ d. his mother's death had upset him.

5. What things were done to honor Elvis when he died?
(Check the correct *answers.*)

_____ a. The newspapers printed gossip about him.

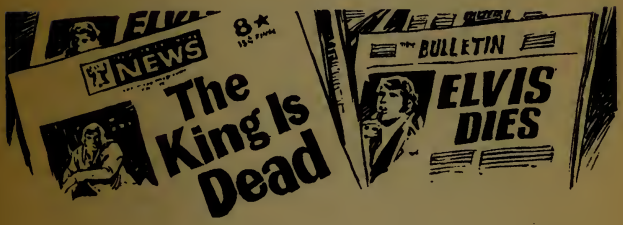
_____ b. Frank Sinatra dedicated a concert to him.

_____ c. His home was made into a museum.

_____ d. Memphis lowered its flags.

_____ e. Over 100,000 fans went to Graceland.

_____ f. President Carter praised him.



Using what you've read

Elvis Presley's concert tours took him to many cities across the country. Some of his concerts were given in schools. Imagine that you have been asked to introduce him to the audience when he appears in your school. What will you say? Write an introduction telling your audience who Elvis Presley is and what he's done. Keep it short, but make sure you cover all the important points.

ANSWER KEY

ELVIS PRESLEY

Can you use them?

1. charts
2. tour
3. concert
4. gossip
5. singing style

How well did you read?

1. b, c, e
2. d
3. a
4. c
5. b, d, e, f

NOTES

NOTES

COMPLETE LIST OF POCKET CLASSICS AVAILABLE

CLASSICS

C 1 Black Beauty
C 2 The Call of the Wild
C 3 Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde
C 4 Dracula
C 5 Frankenstein
C 6 Huckleberry Finn
C 7 Moby Dick
C 8 The Red Badge of Courage
C 9 The Time Machine
C10 Tom Sawyer
C11 Treasure Island
C12 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea
C13 The Great Adventures of Sherlock Holmes
C14 Gulliver's Travels
C15 The Hunchback of Notre Dame
C16 The Invisible Man
C17 Journey to the Center of the Earth
C18 Kidnapped
C19 The Mysterious Island
C20 The Scarlet Letter
C21 The Story of My Life
C22 A Tale of Two Cities
C23 The Three Musketeers
C24 The War of the Worlds
C25 Around the World in Eighty Days
C26 Captains Courageous
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